

Spokane County 911 recently completed a two week survey tracking the number of non-initialized cellular phone calls placed to our 911 center. During the course of the survey our center received 290 calls from non-initialized cell phones where the caller either hung up or were harassing 911. These 290 calls have impact on citizens who have real emergencies and are attempting to contact 911. They can potentially delay the answering time or even the possibility of receiving a busy signal by callers with real emergencies because the 911 lines are tied up by non-initialized cell phone calling 911 that do not have an emergency.

Two years ago we received 911 calls from a non-initialized cellular phone that was an open line and therefore tied up one of our 911 trunks and made it unavailable for emergency calls. On the line would either be loud music, open line, or occasionally profanity. On many of these calls we were able to get a Phase 2 location from the cellular phone which provides us with latitude and longitude that we could then plot on a map, but when officers were available to respond, they could find nothing in the area. On more than one occasion, the Phase 2 location put the caller in the middle of a lake.

After getting an average of 8-12 calls per day for several days, we attempted to track down the phone company and owner of the phone. The cellular company was able to find an old record of the phone having had service through them. This record lead us to a Washington State agency on the west side of the state. One of the employees there was able to track down the history of the phone and found it had been sold at auction some time ago. There was no record of the buyer.

Spokane County 911 ended up receiving approximately 120 calls over two week period from this phone before the calls ended abruptly. In the end we were never able to locate the owner of the non-initialized cellular phone. This scenario is an excellent example of the impacts that non-initialized cellular phone has on 911 centers as well as time consumed by law enforcement officer throughout the United States.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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